
Thanksgiving-Sermon,

PREACHED

in the Parish Church of *GREENSTED*,

IN

E S S E X

Thanksgiving-Sermon

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THANKSGIVING-SERMON,

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In the Parish Church of GREENSTED,

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E S S E X,

On THURSDAY *November* 29, 1759.

Being the Day appointed by Proclamation for a general
"Thanksgiving to God, for vouchsafing such signal Successes
"to His Majesty's Arms, both by Sea and Land, particularly
"by the Defeat of the *French Army in Canada*, and the taking
"of *Quebec*; and for most seasonably granting us, at this Time,
"an uncommonly plentiful Harvest."

By JOHN HARRIS, LL.B.

Rector of the said Parish.

Published at the Desire of several neighbouring GENTLEMEN, and
Others.

L O N D O N:

Printed by E. OWEN and T. HARRISON, in *Warwick-Lane*.

MDCCLIX.

THANKSGIVING-SERMON,

PREACHED

IN the Parish Church of GREYSTED,

1734

ESSAY

ON THURSDAY, November 20, 1734.

Being the Day appointed for a general
"Thanksgiving to God for the great Success
of the Christian Religion, particularly
in the Kingdom of Great Britain, and the
"of Wales; and for the great Increase
"an uncommonly plentiful Harvest."



BY JOHN KERRIS, B.A.

Minister of the said Parish.

Printed by J. KERRIS, at the Sign of the Ship, in the Strand.

LONDON.

1734.



A

Thanksgiving-Sermon, &c.

Deut. xxxiii. 29.

Happy art thou O Israel ; Who is like unto thee ? O People saved by the Lord, the Shield of thy Help, and who is the Sword of thy Excellency ! and thine Enemies shall be found Liars, (or, as in the Margin, shall be subdued,) unto thee, and thou shalt tread upon their High Places.



MOSES the Man of God, the great Lawgiver and Leader of the Jewish People, having delivered them out of Egypt ; conducted them through all " Perils, in the Wilderness," and brought them as far as the Borders of the promised Land ; was now arrived at the last Period of his Life, and Office : A solemn Summons was sent him, to prepare for his Departure, and to " be gathered " unto his People."

In these his last Moments, the pious and patriot Leader, addresses himself to the whole Congregation of *Israel*, gives them

the most earnest, and interesting Instructions, for their future Conduct; congratulates their present Felicity, and prophetically describes their future Victories, and Success; closing the Whole, in the emphatical Words of the Text, "Happy art thou O *Israel!* who is like unto thee? O People, saved by the Lord, "the Shield of thy Help, and who is the Sword of thy Excellency; and thine Enemies shall be subdued unto thee, "and thou shalt tread upon their High Places."

This was, long ago, the prosperous State of *Israel*:—And it will be no difficult Task, for the Reader (who is disposed to compare the State of different Nations, in antient and modern Times, and draw a Parallel between them,) to point out a People, whose present Circumstances bear a strong Resemblance, and Analogy, to those which are specified in the Text.

The Cases indeed are so similar, that I rather apprehend, you are beforehand with me, in my intended Application: It has occurred to your Thoughts, before I remind you of it, that *We Ourselves* are the People, to whom the Language of the Text may be accommodated, with the greatest Fitness, and Propriety; Happy as we are, in the Divine Protection, and Assistance; Happy in prevailing over our Enemies, and becoming Masters of their High Places. And in this Similitude of Circumstances, can we read the Description of *another* People's Felicity, without recollecting, and feeling *our own*? and can we *recollect* our own, and *feel it*, as we ought to do, without lifting up our Hearts, to that gracious Power, who thus "prevents us, with "the Blessings of Goodness", and hath "crowned us with "Glory, and Honour?"

In order therefore to "fulfil your Joy," and to give a right Direction to your Gratitude, on the present Festival; I shall endeavour to represent to you,

In the first Place,

A general View of those signal, and repeated Successes, which God has blessed us with, in the Compass of the present Year; in which, the Pertinency of the Text, to the Occasion of this Assembly, will sufficiently appear; and lead us on,

In the second Place,

To a proper Improvement of our Subject, by introducing the Mention of such Duties, as the present Posture of our Affairs does, in an especial Manner, require of us:

And First,

We are to take a general View of the signal, and repeated, Successes of the present Year.—A glorious, and a pleasing Subject; greatly conducive to the Honour, and Happiness of our native Country, and a manifest Indication of the Divine Protection, and Assistance.

Numerous Armies defeated, by Land; Naval Conquests, and Captures made, by Sea; Cities, and Territories brought into Subjection; a formidable Chain of Strong-holds, and Fortresses, reduced, or surrendered, to our victorious Forces, have been the glorious Fruits, and Rewards, that have crowned our Attempts, against the Power of our Enemies, in the Compass of the present Year.

Search all the Records of History, and see, whether they afford an Instance of any other War, carried on at the same Time,

in

in so many, and such remote Quarters of the World, as that we are now engaged in; and yet, (to our agreeable Surprize) in all its wide-distant, and extensive Branches, we hardly meet with any such Thing as a Victory, or any important Advantage, gained against us, by all the Subtilty, and Power, of the Enemy: Not an Army of ours defeated; not a Fleet overcome; scarcely a single Town, scarcely a Ship of War, lost or taken from us, during the Period we are surveying.

This is enough to pronounce us a "Happy People;" This is indeed an uncommon Blessing, to be so little *Sufferers*; at the same Time, that we have been such considerable *Gainers*, by our many beneficial, and important Acquisitions, in the present War. And,

That which greatly enhances, and casts an additional Lustre on these prosperous Events, is the Consideration of the several Difficulties, and Disadvantages, through which they have been obtained. Witness that illustrious Victory, which rescued His Majesty's Electoral Dominions, from the cruel Insults, and Oppression of the Enemy: Witness that memorable Defeat, which drew after it the Surrender of their Capital City, and the Subversion of their Empire, on the Western Continent:—The *Former*, in a great Measure, owing to the invincible Bravery, of a small Body of our own Countrymen, against a vast Superiority of Numbers:—The *Latter*, gained, in Opposition to such Obstacles of Art, and Nature, as seemed to bid Defiance to our utmost Efforts.

Thus, to a Degree beyond our Expectation, and infinitely beyond our Deserts, the Text has been verified, in our late Successes;

cesses ; All that had been granted, All that had been promised to the *Israelites*, has been abundantly made good to Us: "The Lord hath been " the Shield of our Help, and the Sword of our " Excellency ; Our Enemies have been subdued unto us, and " we have trodden upon their High Places."

I might go on, and mention their Commerce destroyed ; their publick Credit sunk ; their Coin exhausted ; their Coasts invaded ; and our own, (notwithstanding all their Menaces, and Resentment,) hitherto unmolested,—unattempted.

But it is not necessary to enumerate every Particular ;—the Whole may be summed up, in the Words of the Psalmist, "*They* are brought down, and fallen, but *We* are risen, and " stand upright."

My Business is now, in the second Place, to make a proper Improvement of this Subject, by recommending the Practice of such Duties, as the present Posture of our Affairs does, in a special Manner, require of us.

Let us begin with those that relate to God ;—with a View to the Past, and likewise to the Future. As to the Past, " What shall we render unto the Lord, for All the Benefits that he hath done unto us ?"—" We will go into his Tabernacle, we will worship, at his Footstool :"—We will enter into his Gates with " Thanksgiving, in the Voice of Joy, and Praise ; with the " Multitude that keep Holy-day."

We *will*,—we *have*, I hope, already performed these Duties, in this our morning Sacrifice of Praise, and Thanksgiving, " At the

“ the Time appointed, on our solemn Feast-day.” This we have done, and thus far, we have done our Duty : but do not imagine, that *this* is All ;—the Blessings that we now commemorate, are too many in Number, and of too great Importance, to be repaid *at once*, with the short Service of a *few* Hours, and the transient Acknowledgments of a *single* Day.

Our whole Lives, and all our future Actions, must testify, and “ fill up the Measure” of, our Gratitude to God : “ for, *consider*, how great Things he hath done for us !” *Already* ;—and, As to the Future ;—our absolute Dependance is upon *Him* :—What glorious Things have we still to hope, what Miseries to fear, from the Continuance, or withdrawing of his Goodness from us ?

“ If the Lord himself had not been on *our Side*, when Men “ rose up against us, they had swallowed us up quick, when they “ were so wrathfully displeased at us.” And should we now provoke him, (by our Ingratitude, and Disobedience,) to “ shut up “ his loving Kindness, in Displeasure ; should he cast us off ; and “ put us to Confusion, and go no more forth, with our Armies ;” All our Joy would soon be turned into Mourning ; all our “ Glory changed, into Shame,” and Dishonour. For, what is the present Posture of our Affairs ? Not such a State of Exaltation, and Superiority, as entitles us to say, “ We shall never be “ cast down, there shall no Harm happen unto us.” Our Happiness, great as it is, is not yet compleat ; we fight for Peace ; (a safe, and a lasting Peace ;) but our Adversaries, though often defeated, are not yet disabled from prosecuting the War : Irritated, not disheartened, by their ill Success, they still “ breathe out “ Threatenings, and Slaughter, against us.” They are in Readiness,

ness, and meditate an Invasion of these Kingdoms, to bring the War home to our own Doors, and to make these happy Regions, the Seat of Bloodshed, and Devastation. †

Now, if ever, we are bound to “seek the Lord,” and the Continuance of his Favour; now, is the Time that bids us “be strong, and of good Courage; fear not, neither be dismayed.” “Trust in the Lord, and keep his Commandments:” “This do, and we shall live.” But, if all his Mercies cannot win us over to Piety, and Obedience; our Joys, and Triumphs, are precarious; and we shall be wretchedly unthankful, in the Midst of all our Thanksgivings, to the God of our Salvation.

Next, after the Duty of Piety, stands that of Loyalty to our Sovereign; in this Order they are ranged by the Apostle, “Fear God, Honour the King.” Our present most gracious Sovereign has a Right to our Obedience, at *all Times*; and the just, and gentle Exercise of his Power over us, renders him “worthy for whom we should do this;” but, at *the present juncture*, the strongest Expressions of our Zeal, and Fidelity, an inviolable Attachment to his sacred Person, Family, and Government, a ready Concurrence with his Measures for the publick Good, and our earnest Prayers for a Blessing upon his Arms, and Councils, are necessary in the highest Degree; not only as Proofs of our Allegiance, and Testimonies of our Gratitude, for his wise, and happy Management of our Affairs, but likewise as the most effectual Means to strengthen his Hands, and enable him to accomplish the great Work, which

† This Scheme has been happily disconcerted, by the Victory obtained over the French Fleet from Brest: But the Reader will observe, that the Account of it was not received, till after the Delivery of this Discourse.

he has begun, and hitherto carried on, so much to the Honour, and Happiness of his People.

In the antient Histories, of this Kingdom, we find two of our martial Kings, justly celebrated for the signal Victories they obtained over the Armies of *France*: Our Ancestors behaved, in those Days, just as their Posterity has lately done; Bravery, and Valour, triumphed over all the Inequality of Numbers:—But to what End?—To conquer *France*, and place the Crown on their own Sovereign's Head:—This, whatever additional Lustre it had reflected, on the Prince that wore it, had derived no real, substantial Advantage to his native Subjects; they had most probably been ruined by it, in the End.

But, this is not the Nature of the present Contest. It is not, for the Sake of adding new Crowns, and Sceptres, to his former Dignities, that our Sovereign has called his Subjects to Arms, but he has taken upon himself the weighty Cares of War, to do *Them* effectual Justice, to promote the immediate Interests of his People, and assert their just, and necessary Rights. These are what we would have possessed, without disturbing others; These, we would put it out of the Power of others to disturb again.

What Expressions of Allegiance, and Loyalty, have we testified to that Prince, who is he is, in other Respects, "The Minister of God," is in this Respect, the Minister of his People; and makes *their* Welfare the ruling Principle, and Glory of his Reign?

But it is not in my Power, to do Justice to this amiable, and distinguishing Part of the Royal Character. I proceed to another Topic,

The Duty of Unanimity, and Concord among ourselves.

This has already been productive of many happy Consequences, and more may reasonably be expected, from its Continuance amongst us. What would be the fatal Effects of departing from it, we may judge, by the Reason of Things, and we have felt by Experience.

Another *seasonable* Duty, is Constancy, and a steady Perseverance in those Measures, which lead to the great and final Object of our Desires.

We have one great Inducement to do this, and to bear the Inconveniencies of the War with the greater Patience, by considering that this Calamity has befallen us *single*, unaccompanied with any other general Hardship, or Distress.

Not a Century ago, our Ancestors being engaged in a burdensome, and bloody War, were visited at the same Time, with a consuming Pestilence, and immediately after that, with a destructive Fire, which laid the chief City of the Kingdom in Ashes.

But now, such Evils are all removed from us; no contagious Sickness unpeoples our Dwelling Places; no infectious Distemper diminishes our Cattle; no Scarcity of Provisions augments

augments the Misery of the Poor, and the Expences of the Rich; but on the Contrary, our Cattle are strong, and healthy, "our Garners are filled with all Manner of Store;" we are in Plenty, and we have a *Prospect* of Plenty: The Lord "crowneth the Year with his Goodness, and the Clouds drop "Fatness."

This is another affecting Instance of the Divine Goodness towards us, *at this Time*; a great Comfort, and an Encouragement to us, to go on, "steadfast unto the End;" to "endure "all Things," that are necessary to "break the Rod of our "Oppressors," to keep their "Yoke from off our Necks," and to "cast away their Cords from us."

But, lastly, Let us not omit a Virtue, (too apt to be forgotten, and omitted, amidst the joyful Acclamations, and Triumphs of Victory,) I mean Humility, and Tenderneſs of Heart; and Let us not be guilty of a Vice (indecent, and intolerable, even in *Conquerors*) I mean Arrogance, and insulting the Vanquished; over whom we "could have had no Power at all, "except it had been given us from above."

Our natural Right of Self-Defence, does not require, and cannot justify, such Practices: All wanton Cruelty, and Malice, is contrary to the Law of Arms, as well as to the Law of Christ; true Courage and Magnanimity disdains all barbarous Ravages, and making a perfect Desert in the Enemy's Country, in Conformity to that un pitying Sarcasm, of the sacrilegious *Gaul*, "Woe to the Vanquished!"

How much more glorious would it be, to see all the Christian Powers reconciled, and living together in perfect Peace, according to the Commandment of our common Lord, and Saviour? But this is a Happiness too great to be obtained, while arbitrary Princes are swayed by false Glory, and boundless Ambition, and there is one, nearly adjoining to us, accustomed to "put forth his Hands against such as be at Peace with him, and to break his Covenant."

In this corrupted State of Things, "*It is impossible, but that Wars, like "Offences, will come; but wo unto him through whom they come."* Great is the Guilt of the injurious Aggressor; while they who are forced to arm, in Defence of their own Rights, and the common Liberty, are unblameable, and praise-worthy; and, (as the Public Voice declares) 'Immortal is the Glory, of That Man, who dies in his Country's Cause.'

To conclude All,

May the GOD of Peace, once more "guide our Feet into the "Way of Peace," and "make Wars to cease, in all the World." May HE, in Pity interpose, and stop the Effusion of Christian Blood, for Christ's Sake, who shed his own Blood for us all; and died for our Redemption, that we might live according to his Will, in this World, and live with him for ever, Partakers of his Glory, in the World to come.

F I N I S.

How much more glorious would it be to see all the Church
 united, and living together in perfect peace, according
 to the Commandment of our common Lord, and Saviour: But
 this is a thing too great to be obtained, while arbitrary
 Principles are twayed by false Glory, and boundless Ambition,
 and this is one, nearly adjoining to us, accustomed to "put
 forth the hands against him, as he sits at Peace with him, and
 to break his Covenant."

In this remote State of Things, "It is impossible, but that
 we, like "Others, will come; but we will come through reason
 and equity." Great is the Guilt of the injurious Aggressor; while
 they who are forced to arm, in Defence of their own Rights,
 and the common Liberty, are unaccountable, and praise-worthy;
 and (as the Public Voice) "Immortal is the Glory of
 that Man, who dies for his Country's Cause."

To conclude All,
 May the God of Peace, once more guide our Feet into the
 "Way of Peace," and "make Ways to cease, in all the World."
 May He, in His interposition, and stop the Effusion of Christian
 Blood, for Christ's sake, who shed his own Blood for us all; and
 shed for our Redemption, that we might live according to his
 Will, in the World, and live with him for ever. Partners of
 the Glory, in the World to come.